comments received from different quarters, the Draft Bill was recast and circulated to Central Ministries concerned and State Governments/ UTs. Comments received are under consideration.

(b) The objective of the proposed Nyaya Panchayats Bill is to provide a sound institutionalized, alternative forum at the grassroots level with community involvement for dispute resolution through mediation, conciliation and compromise.

The Draft Nyaya Panchayats Bill provides for establishment of Nyaya Panchayats at the level of each Village Panchayat or a cluster of Village Panchayats. The Nyaya Panchayats are proposed to be constituted through the election of the Nyaya Panchas by people residing in the area to which the jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayats extends. Provisions are proposed for the reservation for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to ensure their representation in the Nyaya Panchayats. The Draft Bill defines the civil, criminal and additional jurisdiction of Nyaya Panchayats. In the Draft Bill, conciliation is proposed as primary means of dispute resolution. Further, Nyaya Sahayaks, who will assist the Nyaya Panchayats in performing their function of dispute resolution, have been proposed. Nyaya Panchayats are proposed as separate and independent dispute resolution bodies, distinct from the Gram Panchayats.

(c) No firm date in this regard can be given as the Draft of the Nyaya Panchayats Bill is under consideration.

Indo-Iran joint commission meeting

685. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA:
SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he had paid a two-day visit to Iran on July 29-30 to attend the India-Iran Joint Commission meeting;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether he had discussed the long pending Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project during the visit; and

(d) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. The visit to Iran on 29-30 July 2008 was to attend the NAM Ministerial meeting.

(c) Yes.

(d) The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project was discussed during bilateral meetings with the President and Foreign Minister of Iran.

Attack on embassy in Kabul

686. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA:
SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Embassy in Kabul was attacked recently and about 41 people including four Indian officials were killed;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that a series of planned attacks on the workers engaged in various developmental projects being executed by the Indian Government in Afghanistan were reported in the recent past; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) On 7th July 2008, at 0831 local time, a vehicle borne improvised explosive device was exploded by a suicide bomber near the entrance gate of the Indian Embassy in Kabul. The attack resulted in the tragic deaths of Shri V.V. Rao, Counsellor, Brig. R.D. Mehta, Defence Attache in the Embassy and their Afghan driver Mr. Neamatullah who were in an Embassy vehicle. Constable Ajay Singh Pathania (ITBP), Constable Roop Singh (ITBP) and 55 Afghan nationals (including 11 security personnel and 17 schoolchildren) were also killed. More than 150 persons received injuries. A large number of vehicles, both inside and outside the Chancery premises, were badly damaged. The Chancery building was also badly damaged. The attack on our Embassy was a dastardly terrorist attack perpetuated by the enemies of peace in Afghanistan and our region.

(c) and (d) Yes. The Government of India are executing various developmental and humanitarian projects in Afghanistan which have been targeted by militants on many occasions. The security of our Embassy and four Consulates and their personnel has been augmented. The Afghan Government have been fully sensitised on providing adequate protection to Indian project workers and personnel in different parts of Afghanistan.

Establishment of rail lines by China

687. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that China announced its plans to establish six more rail lines to Qinghai-Tibet plateau in the Himalayas which are expected to be put into operation before 2020;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Government have seen reports in the Chinese media stating that China is planning to add six more rail lines to the Qinghai-Tibet railway by 2020. According to these reports, the planned lines are: (i) Lhasa to Nyingchi; (ii) Lhasa to Shigatse; (iii) Golmud (Qinghai province) to Chengdu (Sichuan province); (iv) Golmud to Dunhuang (Gansu province); (v) Golmud to Kuerle (Xinjiang XUAR); and (vi) Xining (Qinghai province) to Zhangye (Gansu province). These media reports also indicate that the extension of the railway line is aimed at contributing to the development of the western region of China.

Government keep a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and take all necessary measures to safeguard it.